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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001856

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TAGS: PREL KPKO MOPS UN ER ET

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA EXPRESSES CHANGE OF HEART ON POST-UNMEE
UN FOLLOW-ON MISSION

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Ethiopia: No Post-UNMEE UN Mission

¶1. (C) Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin called in Ambassador July 7 to seek United States' views and to inform the United States Government (USG) in advance that Ethiopia is now not/not in favor of a follow-on United Nations (UN) military observer mission upon the conclusion of United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) operations in July. Seyoum stated that he discussed this with the Prime Minister and wanted the United States to know first of Ethiopia's position, given the positive role of the United States at the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the United States' strong support for the Algiers process. Seyoum said that the American lawyers for the Ethiopian government (GOE) received a private letter from Sir Elihu Lauterpacht, chair of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), stating that the EEBC remains open to discussions on the border but if there is no response within 15 days the EEBC will officially disband and consider the "virtual demarcation" of the border as final and binding. Seyoum remarked that he believed the EEBC's shift in position reflected a push by some UNSC members for continuation of the EEBC, which the GOE considers now officially disbanded. Likewise, Seyoum speculated, these members want to use the follow-on UN Mission as a mechanism to advocate for the implementation of the EEBC "virtual demarcation" decision. Seyoum made it clear that it is up to the parties to implement the decision, not the UN. Further, from Ethiopia's perspective implementation of any decision on the border is impossible because of Eritrea's violation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and refusal to discuss with the UN, let alone Ethiopia directly, the border and the broader problems in bilateral relations, Seyoum said.

UN Can Facilitate, Not Implement EEBC Decisions

¶2. (C) Seyoum articulated that the position of Ethiopia is for the UNSC, as witnesses, to serve as "facilitators" not as "implementers" or "enforcers" of the EEBC's decisions. Further, Ethiopia opposes "virtual demarcation" and wants the EEBC's original direction for "physical demarcation." More

important, Ethiopia is concerned that by accepting a follow-on UN military observer mission at the conclusion of the UNMEE mandate that Ethiopia is opening itself to pressure from the UN to implement "virtual demarcation" without discussion on consequences and without direct discussions between Eritrea and Ethiopia. For this reason, Seyoum said the GOE now finds a follow-on UN military observer mission unhelpful to the peace process.

Ethiopia: Eritrea Must Step Up

¶3. (C) Seyoum said that the GOE will now hold off on acceptance of such a UN follow-on mission until Eritrea is prepared to discuss the border and bilateral issues with Ethiopia and also engage the UN on a commitment to the Algiers process that includes the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Seyoum added that should the UNSC send an envoy to Addis Ababa to discuss a follow-on UN mission after UNMEE, GOE officials will discuss Ethiopia's position and advise the UN to hold off on a follow-on mission until Eritrea is more receptive to the Algiers Accord. Seyoum concluded that Eritrea's actions have, for all intent and purpose, ended the Algiers process and it is up to Eritrea to restore the process and for the UNSC to remind Eritrea of its obligations to the Algiers process.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador stressed that by not accepting a follow-on UN mission it exposes Ethiopia to more criticism and cuts off opportunities to get the international community focused on the Algiers Process and on Ethiopia's concerns and

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position on the EEBC and implementation process. It would also deny Ethiopia from getting its message on the border heard by the UNSC and cede to Eritrea discussions on the border.

Comment

¶5. (C) While we were disappointed by the sudden shift in Ethiopia's position on a follow-on UN mission, we recommend that should the UNSC send a team to Addis Ababa, the team should address Ethiopia's need for assurances that the UNSC is unified on a "facilitative" role, the importance of the Algiers process for both parties, and the parties' responsibilities to implement a final and binding border decision. Prime Minister Meles returns from the G-8 summit in Hokkaido, Japan at the end of the week and we plan to meet with him on separate issues, but will raise the border issue with him to ascertain the final position of the GOE on a follow-on mission. End comment.

YAMAMOTO